

MONTROSE'S CHAPLAIN : REV. GEORGE WISHART, D.D.

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I

SIR WALTER SCOTT in his *Tales of a Grandfather*¹ gives a vivid account of an attempted rescue of James, Marquis of Montrose, on his last journey to Edinburgh after his defeat at Carbisdale. It is but another exciting episode in a career which, outside that of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," is perhaps the most romantic in Scottish history. Scott was probably quoting from recollection the *Memorie of the Sommervilles*² in which the incident is even more picturesquely recorded. The scene was, however, the Grange of Monifieth, Forfarshire³—not the Grange, Fifeshire, as Sir Walter inadvertently states—and the lady was not a Sommerville, but Jean Auchterlonie, familiarly known as the Lady Grange.

This was not the first recorded visit of Montrose to the parish. While a student at St. Andrews he occasionally visited the district to take part in archery contests on the Broughty Ferry Links. In August, 1628, he lost twelve shillings, and a week later his careful steward records another loss : "In Bruchtie Links, my lord being at the archerie with my Lord Kingorne, the loss being put for payment of the wyne that come from Dundie, my lord bearing part of Reyres laying by heid, 36 shillings."⁴

But an even more important association with Monifieth was Montrose's intimacy with the Rev. George Wishart, at one time Minister of the Parish. In John Buchan's noble biography of Montrose there are frequent references to the earliest *Life* of Montrose by George Wishart, D.D., Bishop of Edinburgh. Written in Latin, and translated later under the title, *Memoirs of the most renowned James Graham, Marquis of Montrose*, it is inspired by the same whole-hearted admiration that, in these later days, has moved Mr Buchan to pay tribute to the man "whose career must rank among the marvels of history," and was the work of the very Wishart who was once Minister of Monifieth. Wishart is worthy of re-

¹ Chap. XLVI.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 433-5.

³ The writer is minister of Monifieth.

⁴ *Memorials of Montrose* (Maitland Club), I, 191.

membrance, if only for the fact that he was the first to appreciate the extraordinary qualities of one of the world's greatest generals.

Wishart was born in 1599, the younger son, as is generally assumed, of John Wishart of Logie-Wishart in the County of Forfar, and grandson of Sir John Wishart of that ilk. His father did not come into the property till Sir John died in 1629, and, in the interval, appears to have settled in East Lothian, where George was born. Young Wishart attended classes at the University of Edinburgh, but there is no record of his having taken a degree there. At St. Andrews, however, a George Wishart entered St. Salvator's College as a student in 1612, and graduated in 1613 at the age of fourteen. The inference is that this student must have received part of his education elsewhere to graduate so rapidly, and was probably our George Wishart from Edinburgh.

For nine years after graduating we have no information about him, save that he married Margaret Ogilvy and had two sons, Thomas and Patrick. It is conjectured that he was on friendly terms with Archbishop Spottiswood, who in 1603 had been advanced to the Archbishopric of Glasgow, and was in 1615 translated to St. Andrews as Primate of Scotland. At his hands, in the new church at Dairsie, "built at his own cost after the English form," Wishart received ordination in 1625. He had been appointed by the King to the parish of Monifieth in succession to Patrick Durham who died on 23rd August, 1624. The Kirk Session records state: "The quhilk day, 18th September, 1625, the Archbishop his edict was servit at the Kirk doore for admission of Mr. George Wishart to the Ministrie of Monifieth on Tuysday next, the 20th instant. The 20th of September the said Mr. George resavit ordinatione in Dairsey." Apparently there had been no service in Monifieth from June 27, 1624, till Wishart's arrival on September 25, 1625, save once in January. The old Church was on the site of a Culdee chapel which had replaced a pre-Christian sacred enclosure. When Wishart arrived, it was undergoing repair with stones, brought down the Tay from the ruins of Balmerino and carted from the shore by the heritors. During his brief tenure of office, from September 20, 1625, to April 3, 1626, the chancel was repaired. "Masons, skleiters, and glassen-wrichts had all to be satisfied," and the work was finished just when Wishart left.

The only matter of domestic interest in the records regarding Wishart is the baptism of his daughter Jean on Friday, December 23, 1625. The witnesses were Thomas Wishart of Ballindarg, Wishart's second cousin; John Durham, minister of Monikie, who died father of the Church in 1639—"an aul agit man," whose memory went back to the time of the Reformation in 1560; and William Maule in Giuldie. This was Wishart's third child. She shared the vicissitudes of her father's fortunes, and appears in his will as the spouse of William Walker, minister of North

Berwick. All that is known regarding the later history of Wishart's children is that Patrick became a captain in the army, and was noted by Lauderdale for promotion ; and that Jean's husband died and left her a good library which, however, was not sufficient to meet his debts.

II

Wishart's last service in Monifieth was on April 3, 1626, and on April 10 he took up his duties in the town church of St. Andrews as colleague to Alexander Gladstones, son of Archbishop George Gladstones. The change, no doubt, meant a larger income to him, but it also brought him into the society in Scotland most congenial to a man of scholarly tastes. Montrose entered his old college of St. Salvator on January 26, 1627, and a close intimacy seems to have sprung up between them which ripened with the years. From numerous entries in the St. Andrews Register of the baptisms of Wishart's children we infer that he was on the friendliest terms with the leaders in church, college, and county and city affairs, for among the sponsors are the names of Archbishop Spottiswood, Provost John Carstairs, Sir James Sandilands and others. It is not surprising to find that, before long, the honour of D.D. was conferred upon him.

But the days of prosperity were swiftly drawing to a close, and already the storm was brewing that was to cast down crown and mitre, and Wishart with them. He was, however, destined to see both restored by another turn of the wheel of fortune in 1660, and was himself to become a Bishop under the new regime. The stool of Jenny Geddes symbolised the spark that in 1637 set Scotland in a blaze. Spottiswood saw the work of thirty years cast to the ground, and with other bishops and nobles hurried south in the beginning of 1638. Wishart also fled from St. Andrews, and, when next we hear of him, was occupying a lectureship at All Saints, Newcastle, in 1639. The General Assembly had his case before it in 1638 on a complaint from St. Andrews that he had deserted his charge above eight months. " They seemed content enough with the man's life and doctrine," the record states, " if he would return and acknowledge the Assembly." But this did not happen, and in 1639, after being absent eighteen months, he was deposed. In Hew Scott's *Fasti*, other charges are mentioned—" error in doctrine, immorality and arbitrary discipline,"¹ but, as will appear later, no substantiation of such allegations can be found.

In 1640 he was still in Newcastle when it was captured by the Covenanters under Leslie. He escaped with his life, but must have returned later, for on May 12, 1643, a notice of his appointment to an afternoon lectureship at St. Nicholas is found. In 1644 Newcastle was again besieged by the Scots. The walls were undermined and blown up, the town was plundered, and Wishart with many others taken prisoner. He was

¹ *Op. cit.*, V, 238.

conveyed to Edinburgh, and committed to the Thieves' Hole in the Tolbooth, where the conditions, according to contemporary accounts, were deplorable and disgusting. Indeed, Wishart is said to have carried the marks of the rats' teeth to his grave. His experience in the Tolbooth for twelve months made him a friend of prisoners for life, and in the days of his episcopate at Edinburgh, we are told, he could not enjoy the good things of his table without sending a share to the Tolbooth to alleviate the hunger pangs of his Covenanted successors in that place of misery. The doors of the prison house were unexpectedly opened in 1645 as a consequence of Montrose's victory over the Covenanters at Kilsyth on August 15 of that year, and soon after Wishart found himself in congenial employment as secretary and chaplain¹ to Montrose who, by this time, had received the King's Commission as Governor-General of Scotland. But, alas, for Montrose and his chaplain, Philiphaugh lay hidden in the near future.

III

Wishart appears to have followed Montrose throughout the remainder of the campaign, and finally put to sea with him and his companions from the vicinity of Stonehaven or Montrose on September 3, 1646, when all hope was gone for the present. They landed in Norway a week later, and, after some wanderings, reached the Hague which became the headquarters of the exiles. Here, or at Hamburg, Wishart probably completed the first part of his narrative in vindication of Montrose's action, the story of "the wonderful year," 1644-45. It was written in Latin and was published, probably in Holland, towards the close of 1647. It leapt at once into a wide popularity, and by 1648 was spreading through Europe, where the doings of the Scottish soldier were the talk of every court and camp. So notorious had it become that it was even brought before the notice of the Commission of the General Assembly for condemnation.

In 1649 Charles I. was beheaded. In 1650 Montrose landed again in Scotland for one last valiant attempt on behalf of the Royal house, but it proved even more disastrous for all concerned than the first. On April 27 his little force was destroyed at Carbisdale, a few miles west of Bonar Bridge on the Kyle of Sutherland, and, a few days later, he himself was discovered, a famished wanderer on the confines of the Assynt country, and betrayed into the hands of his enemies. Then began his last journey to Edinburgh in the course of which he came one night to the Grange of Monifieth. There is no mention of the incident in Wishart's narrative: probably it has been lost, for there is a gap in the manuscript, and we are indebted to another source for the details of that memorable evening.

¹ "The army chaplain of these days was a useful person, and his duties were secular as well as sacred, for he was the historian of a campaign and the seventeenth century substitute for the war correspondent."—Buchan: *Montrose*, p. 188.

We are sorry not to have Wishart's account as, from his acquaintance with the district, he could have given the story with local touches.¹

Montrose reached Edinburgh on May 18. He had been judged and condemned before he arrived, and his sentence was handed to him by the magistrates as he entered the city. From this he learned that he was to be hanged on a gibbet—not beheaded, as was the custom with State prisoners—with Wishart's book and a copy of his own last Declaration tied round his neck. He was driven in an open cart to the Tolbooth where, Wishart tells us, "the Ministers and Members of Parliament gave him no respite. Though he wished to fix his mind on higher thoughts, they maliciously beset him with impertinent and troublesome questions of petty import and were unceasing in their reproaches and abuse." One of these ministers was James Durham of Pitkerro, another Monifieth man.² On the night before his death Montrose wrote the following lines with a diamond upon a glass window of his prison :—

" Let them bestow on every airth a limb,
Then open all my veins that I may swim
To Thee, my Maker, in that crimson lake :
Then place my par-boiled head upon a stake,
Scatter my ashes, strow them in the air,
Lord, since Thou knowest where all these atoms are
I'm hopeful Thou'lt recover once my dust
And confident Thou'lt raise me with the just."

"He was a man of most refined genius," writes Wishart on another occasion, "and used to divert his intervals of relaxation from weightier cares with poetry in which he had a very happy vein."

On Tuesday, May 21, 1650, the sentence was duly carried out at the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh. Wishart's account of the closing scene is to be found on the last page of his narrative :—

¹ The casual mention of another name in the narrative recalls a further link with Monifieth which did not exist at the time when Wishart was writing. After describing Montrose's brilliant victory over Argyll at Inverlochy on 2nd February, 1645, he writes : "In this battle though a number of his men were wounded Montrose lost only three private soldiers. But the joy of an outstanding victory [*insignem victoriam*] was clouded by the death of the gallant Sir Thomas Ogilvy, son of the Earl of Airlie, who died of his wounds a few days afterwards. He had won distinction in the King's service under his father-in-law, Ruthven, Earl of Forth and Brentford, an officer of world-wide renown [*virī toto terrarum orbe ob res praeclare gestas notissimi*]." This same Ruthven lies buried in Monifieth Kirk, and a memorial plate, inscribed with the relative facts, is affixed on the east wall of the present building. He died at Dundee on February 2, 1651, "and was interred in Grange-Durhame's ile in the Paroche Church of Monefeithe,"² doubtless owing to the good offices of the same Lady Grange, who a year before had unsuccessfully endeavoured to help Montrose to liberty.

¹ Balfour's *Annals*, quoted in Malcolm's *Parish of Monifieth*.

² Cf. *Records Ch. Hist. Soc.*, IV, 66.

“ The history of his deeds [i.e. Wishart's book] and his late Declaration were then brought to him tied in a cord. He received them with a strange cheerfulness and alacrity, and himself hung them round his neck saying ‘ Though it hath pleased the King to make me a Knight of the most noble Order of the Garter, I think it less honour and glory than this cord and books. I take them with greater joy than when I received the golden chain and glorious badge of St. George.’

“ The bailies and officers of the guard then ordered his arms to be bound and his cloak stripped off. To these he said ‘ Inflict on me I pray you what further shame and ignominy you can devise, I am ready to be all and worse than this with cheerfulness and joy for the cause in which I suffer. God Almighty have mercy upon this perishing nation ! ’ These were his last words. The sentence pronounced upon him, in his absence and unheard, was then executed. He suffered with undaunted courage and wonderful magnanimity. He was a man, even by his enemies' admission and esteem, without equal, and now became a candidate for immortality, changing this poor mortal life for the life of eternal bliss.”

This extract gives a taste of the quality of the author's style, and reveals, as in a mirror, the depth of his admiration for his hero.

IV

At the time of the events which culminated in the execution of Montrose, the erstwhile minister of Monifieth was acting as chaplain to a regiment of Scots in the pay of Holland, quartered at Schiedam, and a poem composed by him in Latin tells of his sorrow on hearing of Montrose's death, and of the love he bore him, a love that could not die. “ True love,” he writes in a closing stanza, “ is drowned by no billows of mischance : true love fears no thunderbolts of fate : true love abides immortal-firm, unchangeable. To have loved once is to love for aye.” Wishart's military charge was afterwards converted into a civil one, and he became minister of the Scottish congregation at Schiedam. The leaders of the Church in Scotland had not forgiven his defection, and did all in their power to oust him from his position, but he held on until the Restoration terminated his exile.

In 1660 he was again appointed lecturer at Newcastle “ on the King's letter ” at a salary of £80, and in April, 1661, we find him applying to the Parliament of Scotland for some support out of the vacant stipends : he was granted £300. The petition¹ is interesting for the light it throws on the period as well as for its personal revelations concerning Wishart's condition :

¹ Reproduced in *Memoirs of Montrose*, edited by Murdoch and Simpson, p. XXIX.

“Whereas your Lo^s has ordaind (for encouragie of others to loyaltie heirafter) That all vacand stipends shall be conferred upon such ministers (or the wyfes and children of such of them as are dead) who during these late trowbles have suffered for their loyaltie, and seeing your Lo^s Petitioner for his loyaltie suffered as earlie, as much, as long, as constantly and patiently, as any of his statione in the Kingdome: Being in anno 1637 forct to flie to another Kingdome from his charge at St. Andrews, and since, once and againe, rob’d of all his goods, imprisond, banisht and, for persisting in his knowne avowed loyaltie and in that Christiane deuty of holdeing up His Majesties conditione and just cause to Almightye in publick worship, followed with persecutione even beyond seas by the late usurpers and that even till the blessed day of His sacred Majesties wonderful restitutione: Theirfor and becaus your Lo^s petitioner is not only valetudinarie and past sixtie alreadie, bot also in regaird your Petitioner’s poor wyfe and children (in caice Providence should remove him) should be unable to defray some little burden, the contracting wheirolf being inevitable by any in your Petitioner’s conditione these twentie zeirs by gone: May it please your Grace etc.”

In September, 1661, the restoration of Episcopacy was proclaimed, and on November 14 a writ passed the Great Seal nominating Sharpe to the Primatial See of St. Andrews, in succession to Spottiswood. Among other appointments Edinburgh was offered to Robert Douglas but declined, and Wishart was appointed. He was consecrated in June, 1662, at St. Andrews “in the Communion Isle” by Sharpe and two transformed Covenanters, Haliburton of Dunkeld and Murdoch Mackenzie of Moray. The Bishops took their seats in Parliament as of yore, and we find Wishart in his place in 1662, 1663 and 1665, taking his share in committee work regarding taxation, commissions for Universities, planting of kirks, &c., but he was not without troubles in his new office. Presbyterianism was not dead, and soon the broken Covenant became the rallying cry of the pious peasantry of the West Country. In November, 1665, an insurrection took place at Dalry, Galloway, which ended tragically and ignominiously at Rullion Green. Forty-five of the rebels were killed, and 100 taken prisoner and subjected to various forms of torture in Edinburgh. Some were lodged in the Tolbooth, and it was at this time that Wishart, moved by the remembrance of his own imprisonment, is said to have sent daily from his own table in the Canongate supplies for these miserable unfortunates.

Two men and two maid-servants seem to have formed the episcopal establishment in the Canongate. They each got £200 under his will, and he left to the poor of Holyrood Parish £500 Scots “to be disposed at the sight of Mr. James Kid, minister, and George Heriot, Balzie of the Canon-gate.” The will was made on his deathbed on July 1, 1671. Knowing death to be certain, and the hour uncertain, and wishing while memory

lasted to adjust his affairs, he committed his soul to God, hoping to be saved "through the onlie merits of our dear Saviour Jesus Christ, and ordainis our bodie to be decentlie and honestlie buried among the faithful when and where it shall please God to call us out of this mortalitie." He died on July 25, 1671, in the seventy-second year of his age, and was buried "within the Kirk of Halyroodhouse, upon the north side, on Satterday the 29th July," where his epitaph, which is becoming illegible, may still be seen. The inscription is an elaborate one in Latin verse, in which he is referred to as "Doctor Agricola Sophocardius," the Latin equivalent for Dr. George Wiseheart, under which name his Commentary on the Deeds of Montrose was given to the world.

V

Except for the minister of Eastwood, Robert Wodrow, who was born in 1679, some eight years after Wishart was buried in Holyrood Abbey, our estimate of Wishart would have been rather favourable. Wodrow was a painstaking historian, and, though his work is not free from partisan feeling and credulity, it is thoroughly honest in intention and is based on genuine research. A man of his sympathies, however, could hardly be expected to look with kindly eyes on a Royalist Episcopalian like Wishart, and one wonders how much of fact and how much of prejudice were commingled in the following reference which occurs in his *History*:

"Mr. George Wishart . . . had been laid under censure by the old Covenanters about the time of the encampment at Dunselaw in the year 1639, and this probably recommended him now [for the See of Edinburgh in 1661]. This man could not refrain from profane swearing even upon the street of Edinburgh, and he was a known drunkard. He published somewhat in divinity: but then, as I find it remarked by a good hand, his lascivious poems . . . gave scandal to all the world."¹

These are damaging accusations which, if well founded, would discredit any man's reputation, let alone a Bishop's; and our difficulty in admitting them as evidence is the fact that they are entirely unsupported. Neither the poems nor the works in Divinity referred to have survived, if ever they existed, and the latest editors of Wishart's book, Canon Murdoch and Dr Morland Simpson, in an elaborate preface, to which the writer is under great obligation for much of his information, have:—

"We do not think it necessary to refute the misrepresentations of Wodrow. They are destitute of any semblance of evidence and are contradicted by the tenor of Wishart's life and his reputation among his contemporaries. He was a genial, kind-hearted, free-spoken man, unconcerned as to how he looked in Puritan eyes, as he mingled with

¹ *Op. cit.*, I, II, §7.

kindly Scots in feast or fray, but his comfortable relations with the best men of his time, and women too, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, evince that his standard was at least as high as that of his age."

That is a rather qualified denial, but, in the circumstances, it is only right to give Wishart the benefit of the doubt.

The only other reference that might be construed as disparaging to Wishart is contained in the *Journal* of the House of Commons, June 18, 1642, which records his dismissal from his preferment at Newcastle on the ground that he was "a frequenter of taverns." This might probably be the source of Wodrow's aspersion. If the time in which Wishart lived is remembered—a time when passion ran high and politics counted for more than personality—it is necessary to be careful in passing judgments, Wishart, assuredly, was never accused of ascetism ; but, on the other hand, there is no confirmation that he was given to intemperance, as Wodrow asserts, or as the phrase "frequenter of taverns" seems to imply.

Over against these disparaging references, another document, which may not be entirely without prejudice in another direction, must in fairness be set forth. Murdoch and Simpson in the course of their researches have unearthed a panegyric from the pen of a contemporary which closes with these words :—

"His revenues were the poor's exchequer : his discourse, his Enemys best apology : his conversation one of the best arguments for Episcopacy : and his life, the most preferable paterne for a generous and pious churchman. But as he desired no other witness to his best actions than his own conscience, so he needs no other monument but his own fame, for he Lived much nearer to what he ought to have been than to what I can Discribe him."¹

This appreciation may sound to our modern ears a trifle laboured, but it is evidently inspired by sincere respect and affectionate admiration. Whatever party may be preferred in the politics of the period, or whatever form of church government favoured, none will be disposed to challenge the final verdict that, whatever his defects, Wishart was a devoted churchman, a consistent constitutionalist, a faithful friend, a kindly benefactor, and a courageous man.

Wishart's book, which is his chief claim to remembrance, is a valuable contribution to the literature of the period. It is more captivating than many historical novels, and, as history, it has been pronounced by authorities to be, on the whole, very trustworthy. Notwithstanding the author's bias, it is in the main temperate and faithful. It is not free from prejudice. Its author hated the Covenanters generally, and waxes ferocious in his scathing attack on Presbyterianism. But in the light of our fuller knowledge we can excuse him. Presbyterianism to-day is not what it was in

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. XXXV.

Wishart's lifetime, and we can read his denunciations with the same relish as we read Patrick Walker's denunciations of Episcopacy and the indulged ministers. The strength of their condemnations is the measure of their convictions. We are grateful alike for Wishart's *History* and for Walker's *Biographia Presbyteriana*. They are both necessary for a right appreciation of the period with which they deal.

Wishart was not an eye-witness of the earlier part of Montrose's campaign. His account of the various battles is, accordingly, lacking at times in clearness. But the narrative moves swiftly, and his account of Montrose's descent upon Dundee in 1645, with a handful of men, and of his narrow escape from the city by the Seagate while his enemies were entering by the Nethergate, makes exciting reading. The route taken by Montrose in his flight was along the coast to Arbroath. Then, under cover of darkness, he doubled on his track to somewhere near Panbride and so, eluding his pursuers, escaped to the hills. It is surprising that Wishart does not allude to Monifieth through which the fugitives must have passed: yet, one almost feels that the memories of other days quickened his pen as he followed in imagination the flight of his hero along familiar roads, and may even account for this unusual outburst of enthusiasm:—

“Such was his memorable march from Dundee, discreditable to his scouts for their blunder, but almost unparalleled for the General's courage, endurance, and presence of mind, in extremity of danger. The resolution and hardiness of his men were likewise marvellous. For sixty miles they marched incessantly, often engaged with the enemy, without food, without sleep, and without a moment's pause to rest. Whether such an account will be believed abroad, or in after ages, I cannot pretend to say: But it rests on the most certain information and the best of evidence. In fact, I have often heard officers of experience and distinction, not in Britain only, but also in Germany and France, prefer this march of Montrose to his most famous victories.”

In his original preface, Wishart writes apologetically: “As for the author, he professes no great skill in such [historical] studies, and expects no reputation for genius, of which he has little or none, nor profit and advantage, which are, to many writers, their chief incentive.” He needed not to apologise for his literary style. Continuing, he gives the *raison d'être* of the book: “His sole object in putting hand to this slight work has been to spread the truth among other nations, and transmit it to posterity. He has learned by recent and lamentable experience in a similar case that prosperous villainy finds many friends, while truth in distress has but few to plead his cause.”

And so, under the cloak of the Historian we come again upon the cassock of the Preacher, and salute across the intervening centuries the whilom minister of Monifieth.

